

# Promoting Positive Behaviour & Managing Challenging Situations



[Scouts.ca/safety](https://scouts.ca/safety)



It starts with Scouts.

## Introduction

It is expected that youth participating in a Scouting activity will be excited and full of energy—and at times they will display inappropriate or challenging behaviour. Ongoing disruptive, disrespectful or defiant behaviour distracts from the program goals and compromises the safe enjoyment of Scouting.

This guide is designed to build upon information found in the **Scouter Manual**. It will provide you with strategies to promote positive behaviour, and discourage challenging and disruptive behaviour.

It is important to remember that addressing challenging behaviour requires a consistent response over time; it cannot be achieved with one activity at the start of each Scouting year.

The term “parents” is used in this guide to describe both parents and guardians for youth members.

## Challenging Behaviours—Definition

Challenging behaviour is defined as any behaviour that is socially unacceptable and affects the safety, participation, enjoyment, or rights of others.

## Youth Protection

As with all other Scouting activities, the management of behaviour must be consistent with our **Code of Conduct** and **Child Abuse Prevention policy**. The Code of Conduct is a commitment to treat people with fairness, respect and dignity at all times. Physical, abusive or humiliating punishments have no place in Scouting; e.g., push-ups as a consequence.

**If you have any concerns about the welfare of youth, you must immediately seek advice from the Safe Scouting Team by calling 1-800-339-6643 for urgent matters or by emailing [safety@scouts.ca](mailto:safety@scouts.ca).**

## Why Does it Happen?

All youth will test boundaries as part of their development and growing up; most youth will also display challenging behaviour at some point. Challenging behaviour can have a number of causes, including:

- Illness or conditions such as attention deficit disorder or developmental delays
- Unstructured programming
- Boredom or too much energy
- Difficulty with transitions
- Child abuse
- Bullying

Although we may not always be able to influence the cause (or causes) of such behaviour, we can take action to address it.

## Promoting Positive Behaviour

It is important to create an environment that encourages positive and respectful behaviours. All Scouters and youth leaders in your Section must demonstrate respectful and positive behaviour based on the **Promise and Law**. Youth will copy inappropriate or disrespectful behaviour and will become confused if the management of discipline is inconsistent and unfair.

Every Section should have a code of conduct that is developed by youth (see Appendix A for examples and related activity). It is important that this code is owned and accepted by the youth; it must not be a list of rules written by Scouters.

All youth should understand and accept the code, which should always be sent and made available to parents. Youth who join through the year should have the code explained to them by a member of their Section Leadership Team and informed that it was created by the youth.

The code should be revisited throughout the Scouting year and always used to manage behaviour. The code should be positive in tone, include agreed-upon consequences for minor breaches and be managed by the Section Leadership Team.

## A Quality Program on the Canadian Path

Quality programs play a significant role in promoting positive behaviour. Programs that are poorly facilitated and that do not engage youth through **Plan-Do-Review** cycles will result in boredom and frustration. Youth who are bored, frustrated or otherwise not engaged will seek to entertain themselves; some will start to demonstrate challenging behaviour.

Routines play an important part in managing behaviour. Use ceremonies, program activities and games to create a routine for your Section. Youth who have autism (or other special needs) often find routines helpful. If you are deviating from your normal routine, ensure that everybody understands what is happening. Some youth will need more support to adapt to even simple changes in routine.

## Praise and Recognition

It is important to recognize and reward positive behaviour. With the youth, develop a system that recognizes positive and improved behaviour. Youth should be as engaged in this process as they are with developing a code of conduct. You might suggest:

- Awards for good citizenship
- A token, such as a stuffed animal, to recognize fair play
- A points system for Beavers or Cubs, where their lodge or lair can accumulate points towards a reward
- Scouting prizes or recognition for kind, helpful and respectful behaviour

This process must be consistent to ensure that it is fair and prevents any opportunity for favouritism.

## Parents

It is important that parents are engaged with your Section and understand how behaviour is managed. Ask parents of youth with learning disabilities how they support their child at home and what steps are taken at school to manage behaviour. Consistency is very important for these youth.

You will need to consider when to notify parents of challenging or disruptive behaviour. You should always inform parents when behaviour is:

- Violent
- Bullying
- Harassing
- Persistent (especially when your attempts to resolve it have not been successful)
- Dangerous (for any youth or adult)
- Discriminatory (on the grounds of race, sexual orientation, gender or religion or disability/illness)

Your Group should agree on how the Group Commissioner will be informed of these behaviours.

Approach parents in a respectful and concerned manner and seek their help to address the behaviour by:

- Communicating that you wish to support the youth in Scouting
- Explaining exactly what has happened and what steps you have taken
- Understanding how parents and the youth's school manage behaviour
- Establishing what the triggers of poor behaviour are

Do not wait until behaviour deteriorates to the point that you may need to restrict a youth's access to Scouting. Parents will not be supportive if they perceive that you have jumped to a harsh punishment.

Remember to inform parents when behaviour improves or when you have recognized particularly good behaviour.

## Getting to Know Your Section

Knowing the youth in your Section is vital to managing their behaviour and spotting signs of concern. Take time to get to know the youth and learn how they usually behave. This will allow you to spot changes in behaviour and to act to ensure safety or prevent challenging behaviour.

If, despite your best efforts, you are unable to recognize the cause of the negative behaviour, you should seek advice from your Group Commissioner or the Safe Scouting Team. Unexplained or extreme behaviour can be a sign of child abuse.



## Dealing with Challenging Behaviour

Depending on the behaviour displayed, you may be able to distract the youth from behaving badly by:

- Stopping the planned program and playing a game
- Doing something energetic or calming
- Doing something else for a few minutes and returning to what you were doing or saying
- Being positive and polite (“Please would everyone sit down. Thank you!” Not, “Sit down now!”)
- Changing the facilitating Scouter (to de-escalate situation)
- Using humour or brain teasers, always be careful when using sarcasm as many youth will not understand this and may have their feelings hurt
- Offering assistance
- Reminding youth of upcoming activities
- Changing your tone of voice,
- Ignoring the challenging behaviour
- Providing additional responsibilities or asking the youth for his or her help

The following approach should be followed when confronted with challenging or difficult to manage behaviour:

- 1. Define the behaviour.** We know that behaviour that isn’t addressed becomes accepted behaviour within a Section. Simply stating a youth was ‘acting inappropriately’ is not sufficient in targeting the behaviour that needs to be corrected. The first step in the process therefore becomes defining a specific, observable and measurable behaviour that has been demonstrated. Explain how this behaviour breaches the Section code of conduct.
- 2. Take action.** Address the behaviour with an action; this must include an expectation of future behaviour that is positive and distinctive from the challenging behaviour. You might need to take some form of disciplinary action (using the Section code of conduct) such as a time-out or loss of privileges. Be careful not to single out a youth or reprimand them publicly.
- 3. Inform others.** Ensure the other Scouters in the Section are aware of what you have done and what has happened. This ensures consistency; you may wish to consider logging or recording the negative behaviour. If you do, these records should be kept secure.

## Escalating

If your attempts to manage behaviour do not work, you may need to escalate or change how you respond. In the majority of cases, you should have an escalating response to challenging behaviour:

- 1. Define, take action and inform (as above)**
- 2. Restrict privileges (such as playing games)**
- 3. Inform parents**
- 4. Send the youth home early (always inform parents first)**
- 5. Restrict access to activities (such as camps or outings; always inform parents first)**
- 6. Temporary exclusion, such as three-week timeout (always inform parents first)**

If you reach stage four, five or six, you should always inform your Group Commissioner and keep some simple notes of what has happened. For very serious behaviour, you may need to skip some of the early steps.

You should not consider unsuccessful interventions a failure. All youth will respond differently. If you need help to deal with behaviour, engage with your fellow Section Scouters and your Group Commissioner.

## Special Considerations

If a youth member has a diagnosed physical, mental or behavioural condition, this must be taken into consideration. It is important to discuss with the youth’s parents what support is required.

You may need to provide additional support and adaptation to engage some youth in Scouting. You should speak to your Group Commissioner. For more information on specific issues, please contact your Group Commissioner or the Safe Scouting Department at [safety@scouts.ca](mailto:safety@scouts.ca).



## Review

Just as your Section reviews its adventures, you should review how you deal with behaviour, especially if a particular technique has not worked or interventions that have been very successful. This could be done as a Section, with the Section Leadership Team or as a Scouter Team; use your best judgement to decide what behaviours should be reviewed with whom. Your review of behaviour could also be shared at a Group Committee meeting to help support other Sections who may have similar issues.

## Serious Occurrences

All behavioural incidents involving discrimination, child protection agencies, police, media or any other emergency services shall be deemed serious occurrences and must be **reported immediately by calling 1-800-339-6643**. An incident report must be submitted as soon as possible after your call; email it to **[safety@scouts.ca](mailto:safety@scouts.ca)**.



# Appendix

## Developing a Section Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct creates a set of rules, expectations and rights that all youth will have, as well as what steps will be taken in the case of a Code of Conduct violation. Having the youth establish a Code of Conduct is important because it lays out ground rules that they have all agreed upon together, which will make them more

likely to be followed. The Code of Conduct also helps protect the safety and well-being (emotional and physical) of everyone. With a Code of Conduct, there will also be a predetermined consequence to negative behaviours that is known of, and agreed upon, by the youth.

## Sample Code of Conduct Developed by Beaver-Age Youth

**AT BEAVERS, WE:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Will have fun!
2. Will keep our hands and feet to ourselves
3. Will speak one at a time
4. Will do our Best
5. Are friendly and kind to each other
6. Will play fair
7. Will have good manners and we do as we are told.

## Sample Code of Conduct Developed by Cub-Age Youth

**CUB CODE OF CONDUCT:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. I will respect my Scouters and the other Cubs.
2. I will listen to others talking and raise my hand to speak.
3. I will not interrupt anyone or argue with them.
4. I will not swear or say anything mean about other people.
5. I will not threaten, hit, kick, punch or push anyone.
6. I will not be a bully or make fun of anyone.
7. I will always stay with the group.
8. I will not break anything that doesn't belong to me.
9. If anyone isn't following these rules, I will ask a Scouter for help.

If I don't follow these rules, I will miss out on activities. If my behaviour stays this way, I will miss 3 meetings and won't be allowed to go to special activities or camp coming up. If I bully, hit, kick, say mean things or don't stay with my group, my parents will be told to come pick me up.

Printed name Youth Member \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Youth Member \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Sample Code of Conduct Developed by Scout-Age Youth

### SCOUTS' EXPECTATIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Scouts are expected to respect their Scouters, volunteers, parents and fellow Scouts.
2. Scouts are expected to not take part in any form of bullying, theft, rough play/violence, discrimination of any kind or foul language.
3. Scouts are expected to keep themselves safe and stay with their Troop.
4. Scouts are expected to listen to instructions from their Scouters.
5. Scouts are expected to be supportive and give everyone a chance.
6. Scouts are expected to be prepared for camps and activities by having everything they need.
7. Scouts are expected to participate in meetings and activities, including the Plan-Do-Review process.
8. Scouts are expected to follow the rules to all activities, games, camps and events.
9. Scouts are expected to arrive on time to meetings and events.
10. Scouts are expected to do their best and adhere to the Scout Promise and Law.

### SCOUTS' RIGHTS: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Scouts have the right to feel safe.
2. Scouts have the right to be free from bullying, name-calling, threats and violence.
3. Scouts have the right to be heard.
4. Scouts have the right to be protected from abuse.
5. Scouts have the right to participate.
6. Scouts have the right to equal treatment.
7. Scouts have the right to be respected.
8. Scouts have the right to ask for help.
9. Scouts have the right to be believed.
10. Scouts have the right to be happy and have fun.

### IF A SCOUT IS IN VIOLATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT: \_\_\_\_\_

If a Scout is found to be in violation of the Code of Conduct, they may have to sit out a game or activity, or be requested to not attend a meeting, camp or event. For repeated violations, the Scouts parents/guardians will be called and told about the

behaviour, and may be asked to come pick the Scout up from the meeting, camp or event. Serious or repeated violations may result in the Scout being suspended or expelled from the Troop.

Printed name Youth Member \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Youth Member \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Sample Code of Conduct Developed by Venturer-age Youth

### VENTURERS' EXPECTATIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Foul language, violence, bullying or theft of any kind will not be tolerated.
2. Racism or discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated.
3. Venturers will respect one another and their individual rights.
4. Venturers will refrain from the use of drugs and alcohol.
5. Venturers will act honestly and with integrity.
6. Venturers will be prepared by always being in proper uniform and have the necessary equipment.
7. Venturers will actively participate in meetings and activities, including the Plan-Do-Review process.
8. Personal relationships between members will remain discreet and are not to interfere with Company activities.
9. Venturers are expected to arrive on time to meetings and events.
10. Venturers are expected to do their best and adhere to the Venturer Promise and Law.

### VENTURERS' RIGHTS: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Venturers have the right to feel safe and happy.
2. Venturers have the right to be free from bullying, name-calling, threats and violence.
3. Venturers have the right to be heard and believed.
4. Venturers have the right to be protected from abuse.
5. Venturers have the right to participate and ask for help.
6. Venturers have the right to be respected and treated equally.

### IF A VENTURER IS IN VIOLATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT: \_\_\_\_\_

If a Venturer is found to be in violation of the Code of Conduct, they may have to sit out an activity, or be requested to not attend a meeting, camp or event. For repeated violations, the Venturer's parents/guardians will be called and told about the behaviour, and

may be asked to come pick the Venturer up from the meeting, camp or event. Serious or repeated violations may result in the Venturer being suspended or expelled from the Company.

Printed name Youth Member \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Youth Member \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

